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ABSTRACT

This newsletter focuses on brief descriptions of current projects which are directed toward meeting the stated goals of the Center for Education in the Social Sciences, University of Colorado (CESSUC). These activities include: Urban Problems Course, Summer Resource Personnel Workshop, Protocol Materials Development Project, Academic Year Institute, In-Service Institute, American Historical Association History Education Project, and a Seminar on Social Science Teaching. An editorial by John R. Carnes, Professor of Philosophy, is a commentary on "The Irrelevance of Education." (SHM)

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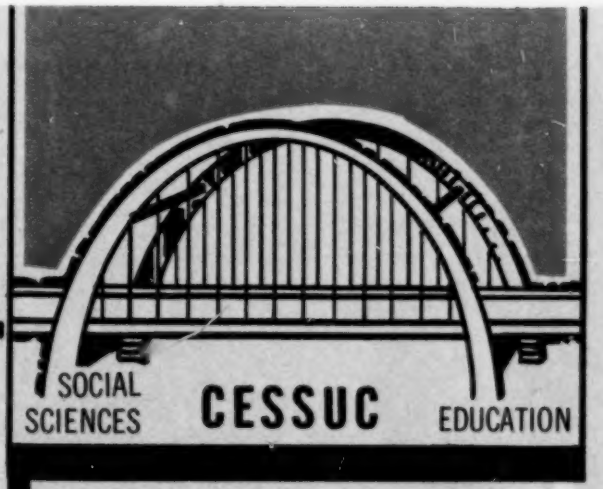
A NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR EDUCATION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

THE BRIDGE



FEBRUARY 1973 UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

Current CESSUC Projects--

. . .Urban Problems Course--The Project produced a high school social studies course entitled "The Cities: A Problems Course" which includes: 1) five student unit booklets--I. Thinking About Cities, II. The Urban Web, III. Poverty, IV. Prejudice, and V. Power; 2) a personal/social action booklet -- "Do It"; and 3) a Teacher's Guide -- "Launching Pads." Also available are two papers: an evaluation of the spring field trials entitled "An Evaluation of an Urban Problems Course" and a paper on curriculum development entitled "Developing an Urban Problems Course: Process and Product." (USOE funding)

. . .Summer Resource Personnel Workshop--City teams from such locations as Seattle, Washington and Houston, Texas meet in Boulder to learn how to teach and to plan for "back home" implementation of NSF social science curriculum projects. Each team is composed of secondary school social studies teachers, a curriculum coordinator, a school administrator, and a social studies educator from a college or university. (NSF funding)

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. . .Protocol Materials Development Project--Various media are employed in the production of materials packages for use in teacher education courses. Films and slide sequences of classroom behaviors are used to illustrate key concepts related to teaching competency. (USOE funding)

. . .Academic Year Institute--For ten social science supervisors, department heads or teachers from public schools in the state of Colorado. This twelve-month institute runs from June 12, 1972 to May 31, 1973, during which time participants will earn 30 semester hours credit in the social sciences and education for the twelve-month period. Participants are engaged in learning about structures of the social sciences and systems approaches to each of the social science disciplines; in studying Colorado as a social system and their own particular "communities as systems";

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Goals of CESSUC--

1. The encouragement of cooperation among the social science departments, the School of Education, and other divisions in the University concerned with social science education broadly conceived.
2. The promotion of multidisciplinary approaches to curriculum, and course and program planning.
3. The encouragement and support of research in the problems and practices of social science education.
4. The encouragement and support of innovative and experimental courses and programs in the social sciences in the University. especially those of a multidisciplinary nature.
5. The provision of expert information, advice, and aid in the securing of funding for research and experimental programs in social science education.
6. The development of liaison between school officials and teachers in the social sciences in the schools of the State of Colorado and the Rocky Mountain Region, and social scientists and social science educators in the University.
7. Service as a "clearinghouse" for information on social science education for faculties of the social science departments and the School of Education in the University, and for public school and university personnel in the larger communities of the state and nation.

in formulating year-long project plans as a total group and as individuals; and in studying rationales, materials, and strategies for the "new social studies" movement. (NSF funding)

. . .In-Service Institute--For thirty ninth-grade teachers from the Boulder Valley and Westminster school districts. The focus of this In-Service Institute is the new curriculum materials package, "From Subject to Citizen." The year following this Institute, all thirty teachers will be teaching this curriculum in their ninth grade social studies classes in the two school districts. The Institute is divided into eighteen three-hour sessions extending from September 15, 1972 to April 17, 1973.

. . .American Historical Association History Education Project--A regional center of the A.H.A's History Education Project was established in Boulder to develop programs within the region to improve the teaching of history. During the past two years the Project has sponsored or co-sponsored in-service workshops, has assisted Northglenn High School, Boulder High School and Fairview High School with the development of new history and social studies courses, and has published six issues of a newsletter entitled History and the Social Sciences in Colorado.

It helped to develop and provide some financial assistance for the "Teaching History in Higher Education" program, sponsored jointly by the CU Department of History and the School of Education. This program consists of a two semester course sequence which includes a semester of teaching experience for graduate students in history. The six semester hours count as a minor field in the History Department's Ph.D. program. (USOE funding)

. . .Seminar on Social Science Teaching--During the spring semester, 1973, over a dozen faculty members from social science departments and a like number of graduate students are meeting every other week "to broaden perspectives and share experiences in the teaching of the social sciences" at CU. The following departments are represented in the voluntary, no-credit seminar: anthropology, economics, education, geography, history, political science, psychology and sociology.

"Has college teaching improved?" and "Is college teaching receiving more attention now than in the past?" None of us has many ways of judging whether teaching is better or worse now than it was at some previous time. The findings and recommendations of an AAUP committee studying the improvement of teaching in 1933 are not very different from those in this book. Such a similarity over so many years may affirm that, within the college and university structure, teaching is always in danger of being neglected, always in need of improvement. I sense a stronger interest in teaching on my own campus today than existed in the sixties. Colleagues in most schools I visited express the same views. A shifting of attention to teaching may be in process as a means of redressing the imbalance between graduate and undergraduate education and as a recognition of economic and social needs.

--Kenneth E. Eble, Professors as Teachers (San Francisco/Washington/London: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1972), pp. 182 - 183.

The Irrelevance of Education

John R. Carnes
Associate Dean, Arts and Sciences, and
Professor of Philosophy

According to William James' pragmatism (a philosophical perspective which comes as close as any to being "the American Philosophy"), value is that which satisfies a claim. Identifying claims with the needs of society produces an external criterion of relevance: the "cash value" (in James' rather unfortunate expression) of whatever it is we do. The current educational jargon of behavioral objectives, input/output, impact indicators, and concern with "relevance" indicates the extent to which we have come to evaluate education on the basis of its product, its cash value, its "pay-off."

Alongside such external demands for relevance, there have developed internal demands from the students themselves. The merit of a course or curriculum is measured in terms of the gut issues to which it speaks, the employment to which it leads, or its pertinence to the students' immediate concerns. Courses dealing with race, poverty, and the urban scene are considered highly relevant. It is the more de rigueur in proposing a new course to include in its title a word like "ecology" or "environment." On the subjective side, the personal concerns of students (the "Who am I?" problem) underlie, for example, the enormous popularity of courses in religion, philosophy, fine arts and the humanities in general.

It is not my purpose to denigrate these genuine concerns; but I do have serious reservations about these criteria of relevance, particularly as they are applied to higher education.

First, the external demand for relevance tends to produce a supermarket model of the university: our shelves are to be stocked with whatever commodities are currently in demand and so the university blows this way and that with each wind of doctrine moving across the social landscape. Second, the insistence on pay-off, cash value, rapidly exhausts the fund of basic knowledge. There is often nothing very exciting or even visible about basic research, and measured against the demand for product, fundamental research even in the sciences (to say nothing of the humanities) will certainly suffer. The external demand for relevance tends to replace science with technology, wisdom with cleverness--and to look for easy answers to hard questions.

My objection to the external demand for relevance is basically one of logic. The usual rhetoric of relevance treats the concept as if it were monadic, or at best dyadic, whereas it is in fact triadic. Significant judgments of relevance are required to specify to whom and for what a particular thing is useful. Thus, such statements as "English Lit. 110 is irrelevant" are, strictly speaking, nonsensical. I am also dubious that any of us knows clearly what he will be doing a year or five years or twenty-five years from now, and therefore the evidence upon which one decides the relevance or irrelevance of a course or curriculum is, to say the least, questionable.

In any event, my thesis is that education is essentially irrelevant, and that so far from apologizing for or attempting to conceal this, we should claim it as our highest virtue. Now it is clear that one needs to distinguish between education and training. The training of a physician or a chemist or an arcwelder is very important and we should give great and careful attention to it. Training is manifestly useful--useful, that is, for something--and is thus highly relevant to someone for that purpose.

Is the same true of education? Consider the following general argument. If A is useful, it must be useful for something else, B. If B is useful, it must be useful for C. If C is useful ... Either there is a Z-term in this sense or there is not. If there is not, then no judgment can be made about the usefulness (the "relevance") of anything, because that judgment depends on finding the next thing for which the thing in question is useful. But if there is a Z, then Z is, strictly speaking, useless, "irrelevant," good <u>for</u> nothing. I maintain that this conclusion holds whether Z be a "final end," or only an "end-in-view" (Dewey), as long as it has the character of endness, Z-ness, about it. If there is no term in the series beyond which one does not look (note that I do not say <u>cannot</u> look), but which one regards as essentially useless, good for nothing, then no judgments of relevance whatever can be made.

If education has this character of an end, this Z-ness, as I maintain, what kind of enterprise could it be? A suggestion is found in that inscription above the doors of Norlin Library which our undergraduates used to have to memorize (a noble practice now fallen into desuetude): "Enter here the timeless fellowship of the human spirit." Not "the urgent fellowship of the human belly," or "the passionate fellowship of the human genitals," or "the profitable fellowship of the human corporation." I maintain that that is what education (as contrasted with training) is about: entering into the fellowship of the human spirit. Note also that education as here conceived is not the <u>means</u> by which one enters that fellowship; it <u>is</u> the entering into that fellowship: of art, music, literature, religion, morality, politics, science.

How now can the question of relevance be put? Shall we say, "Of what use is that fellowship of the human spirit to me, and for what purpose?" But that is surely fatuous. The question must be, not whether education--the fellowship of the human spirit--is relevant to <u>me</u>, but whether <u>I</u> can become relevant to <u>it</u>. I am quite sure that it makes no difference to Plato or Dante or Beethoven whether they can be made relevant to the modern world; but it makes a great deal of difference whether I can be made relevant to them.

Finally, if it is necessary to draw what seems to me to be the obvious conclusion, the words above need to be addressed specifically to the problem of education in the social sciences. Most everyone has long ago decided that the humanities are irrelevant: that is correct

NEW FUNDING SOURCE

The National Institute of Education has recently announced new programs to support research that i relevant to American Education by anthropologists, economists, political scientists and those engaged in the legal profession, as well as by social scientists in general. Deadlines for prospectuses or proposals vary between February 17 and March 1, 1973 and applicants will be notified during June, 1973. Call John Haas or Michael Wertheimer (X7227) for further information and for copies of proposal guidelines.

But the urgent is too often the enemy of the important, and undue prudence will not lead to good prophecy. The important thing is that we act in the faith that it is Truth as a question that makes men free.

--Harris L. Wofford, Jr., "Agent of Whom?", in W. John Minter and Ian M. Thompson (editors), <u>Colleges and Universities as Agents of Social Change</u>, Boulder, Colorado: WICHE, 1968.

and those of us in the humanities should take great satisfaction in the judgment. Nothing is more ludicrous than an attempt to make a course in medieval philosophy or Chaucer "relevant." The natural sciences are schizoid: partly they are and partly they are not "useful," and they should strive to preserve their schizophrenia. The social sciences, by virtue of their subject matter, are in the most parlous state: the very term "social sciences" underscores that fact. But if they are to preserve and carry on the legacy of those great sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, historians, economists and political theorists of the past, if they are to continue to contribute to and participate in the "timeless fellowship of the human spirit," they must resist the seductions of relevance. Along with the natural sciences, they must preserve their essential element of uselessness in its purest form; along with the humanities, they must remain, at their core, good for nothing.

In his extensive research on teacher effectiveness, Ryans finds three prominent patterns of observable classroom behavior or behaving styles: "Pattern X--friendly, understanding, sympathetic teacher behavior; Pattern Y--responsible, businesslike, systematic teacher behavior; and Pattern Z--stimulating, imaginative teacher behavior" (1967, p. 59). Mitzel adds, however, that "more than a half-century of research effort has not yielded meaningful, measurable criteria around which the majority of the nation's educators can rally. No standards exist which are commonly agreed upon as the criteria of teacher effectiveness" (1960, p. 148)....

A general picture of good teaching can be developed, and what emerges is not particularly different from that employed by Socrates and by Plato--both quite different teachers. In a 1969 study, completed by the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education at Berkeley, Eble cites a selected sampling of student opinion at the University of California, Davis campus (1970, pp. 99-100). From an extensive list of teacher traits, these eight emerged as most important: is a dynamic and energetic person; explains clearly; has an interesting style of presentation; seems to enjoy teaching; has a genuine interest in students; is friendly toward students; encourages class discussion; discusses points of view other than his own.

--Richard I. Miller, Evaluating Faculty Performance (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1972), pp. 24-25.

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CENTER FOR EDUCATION
IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO
SOCIAL SCIENCE BUILDING—970 AURORA ST.
BOULDER, COLORADO 80309

443-2211 extension 7227